

ABOUT GROWTH

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Open space preservation in Black Diamond:

How one small city is working to preserve its quality of life

By Jason Paulsen
Administrator, City of Black Diamond

When Black Diamond started developing a community vision in 1989, preservation of open space – key to Black Diamond's unique character – was high on the list of important objectives.

This objective carried forward into the city's efforts to comply with Growth Management Act requirements for comprehensive planning and sensitive areas. The result was a coordinated system of connected green space and sensitive areas mapped as Primary and Secondary Open Space, which serve as the foundation around which the city's planning has occurred.

At the same time, the city was starting discussions with landowners of large undeveloped properties seeking to annex land into the city for urban development. It was determined that a Transfer of Development Rights Program might be the right tool to help accommodate the city's vision for growth and fiscal viability, while protecting the rural character so important to Black Diamond quality of life.

The city reached agreements with key landowners over several years.

They provided that future development of their properties, once annexed into the city, would require the purchase of development rights.

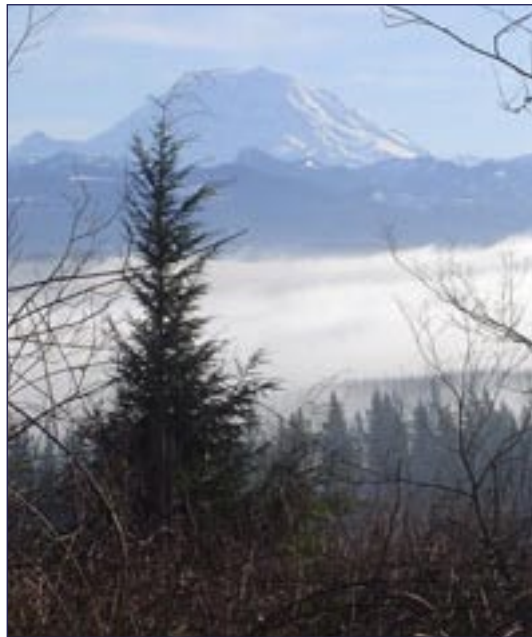
The city council adopted a Transfer of Development Rights Program (TDR) in 2004. The program identifies properties the city wants to see preserved as open space, termed "sending areas," as well as those properties more appropriate for greater densities, termed "receiving areas."

The open space earlier designated as Primary and Secondary Open Space serves as the primary sending area, although additional parcels can be identified in the future.

"It is a very powerful tool," said Mayor Howard Botts, a life-long resident and long-time champion of open space planning in the area. "In many cases the property owners who have been negatively

affected by sensitive areas regulations end up with something of value that can be sold to the development community. Everyone wins."

The program has led to new opportunities to work creatively to conserve open



Conserving open space helps to retain views, such as this view from Black Diamond looking toward Mount Rainier.

PHOTO / COURTESY OF THE CITY OF BLACK DIAMOND

ABOUT GROWTH

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Juli Wilkerson, CTED Director

The department administers the state's Growth Management Act. Its role is to assist and enable local governments to design their own programs to fit local needs and opportunities, consistent with the GMA.

**Nancy K. Ousley, Assistant Director,
Local Government Division**
**Leonard Bauer, AICP, Managing
Director, Growth Management Services**
Rita R. Robison, AICP, Editor

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Planning beneficial for all communities



By Leonard Bauer, AICP
Managing Director,
Growth Management Services

Most of the attention paid to land use planning in Washington is focused on the larger, faster growing areas of the state. However, there're far more small cities and rural counties planning under the Growth Management Act. In 2000 178 of the 281 cities and towns in Washington had populations under 5,000, and 20 of the 39 counties had populations under 50,000 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau).

Addressing the unique and diverse issues facing citizens of these smaller, slower-growing communities and rural areas takes careful planning and attention to detail. Resources are scarce, and must be applied to the most critical issues in a way that will get the most "bang for the buck." Most of these cities and counties don't have professional planning staff and have minimal revenue sources. These jurisdictions have become experts at partnering with each other, and with other organizations, to develop and

carry out plans for addressing local issues. While they may take more time, these partnerships have proven to be successful at helping these communities reach their goals.

This issue of *About Growth* shares examples of planning projects from small communities. Most involve partnerships and creative planning approaches tailored to the character of each community. They also illustrate how the act's requirement for periodic review of local plans is a catalyst for action to successfully address local issues.

The Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) recognizes the importance of this periodic review, but also understands that smaller, slower-growing cities and counties may need longer intervals between reviews. With Governor Gregoire's support, the department has requested legislation to provide additional time for these jurisdictions to complete reviews. The next issue of *About Growth* will report on action on these and other planning-related bills by the 2006 Washington Legislature.

Small town, by design:

Rockford taps growth management to grow proactively

By Rick Hastings
Associate, Studio Cascade Inc.

At just over 400 residents, Rockford certainly qualifies as a small town. Locals take pride in being able to recite phone numbers without a prefix, because in Rockford, they are all the same.

While Rockford residents welcome progress, they don't want to be swallowed up by it. Agriculture's decline has hit the community hard, so economic development is critical. But leaders want growth on their terms – new jobs, income, and opportunities to keep Rockford thriving, but managed in a way that preserves the community's small-town character.

For a town with a tiny budget, it was a large order.

Fortunately, Rockford's existing compre-

hensive plan provided leverage. Citing language supporting a more varied and active business district, the town received a Spokane County Community Development Block Grant for a downtown corridor study.

A cross-section of the community – business owners, historic preservationists, neighborhood leaders, and others – met and worked out a vision for Main Street. Several projects emerged, including two key pilot projects supporting comprehensive plan objectives. The effort helped connect the town's volunteer and business community and establish a framework for promoting Rockford in a coordinated, proactive fashion.

The corridor study helped the town receive funding from the state Department

Meeting best available science requirements in rural communities

By Kurt Danison

Consultant, Highlands Associates

One of the real tests of success for growth management critical areas protection requirements is whether local governments – particularly small, rural communities – are able to effectively prepare, adopt, and carry out compliant regulations.

Most small, rural communities have limited staff resources, often times limited to a clerk/treasurer with a deputy clerk or two and occasionally a building official who often handles enforcement of land use regulations as well as building codes.

For regulations to be effective, they must be simple, easy to understand, and provide clear direction and defined responsibilities for the local government and a project proponent. This was the challenge in the cities of Pateros, Brewster, and Omak as they began work on critical areas updates.

The three communities had adopted comprehensive plans before the passage of the Growth Management Act that generally complied with it, even though the jurisdictions aren't in a county with a full set of requirements under the act. The communities were also in compliance with critical areas protection requirements through a combination of zoning overlays and existing shoreline regulations. All three also received financial assistance from the state Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development and utilized a similar process to prepare and adopt new critical areas regulations.

The initial step in all three communities involved planning commission workshops to review and discuss the requirements and the process proposed to review and revise the comprehensive plan and regulations to ensure compliance with the best available science. Review and revision of the plans took several different forms. It generally resulted in additional policy language in the Land Use Element and critical areas provisions that required use of the best available science. In retrospect, ensuring compliance in the language of the comprehensive plans

was definitely the easy part.

The real effort was put into the regulations themselves. This effort incorporated cooperative relationships with: the Okanogan County Office of Planning and Development for provision of GIS services and data layers; the state departments of Ecology and Fish and Wildlife for technical assistance; CTED for model language and other informational materials; and city staff, city council, and planning commissioners. With data supplied by the county, workshops with resource agency staff, and a draft critical areas regulation prepared by Highlands staff, each community set out to understand and apply the best available science to their unique critical areas.

The end result is that each community has reviewed and revised its comprehensive plan and critical areas regulation consistent and compliant with state law. The process allows for administrative discretion and case-by-case decision making based on location, type and extent of critical areas, and other regulations. At one end of the spectrum is an administrative decision to waive critical areas review with the other end a full-blown critical areas report and environmental impact statement.

Since the three communities are small with limited critical areas and development pressure, the long-term effectiveness of the approach can't be assessed. But each community is satisfied that they have the tools to meet their obligations under the Growth Management Act when and if they're needed.

City tackles revamping downtown

By Norma Becker
Mayor, City of Colfax

Colfax, in southeastern Washington, and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) embarked on a joint street project in 1995, one of the first such collaborative projects in the state. Colfax's Main Street is also State Route 195.

The city wanted to do a Main Street project to enhance the downtown business district. The state was looking for a way to efficiently move traffic north and south on SR 195 between Spokane and Lewiston. By putting the two projects together, both stood to benefit and costs could be shared and held to a minimum.

The project was divided into sections. The state would engineer the part that directly affected the movement of highway traffic – the reconstruction and widening of the street, street lighting, and traffic signals. The city would contract engineering for the enhancement part of the project – sidewalks, curbs, decorative lighting, and landscaping.

Care had to be given by each partner that their design prerogatives didn't infringe on the interests of the other. They agreed to hold a Main Street meeting every Thursday, either at city hall or WSDOT offices in Spokane to pour over the details of every stage of design.

The Thursday meetings involved city and state staff and occasionally Main Street business owners with concerns. Through all the planning and negotiation at the meetings, the project moved forward and came to fruition with as little pain as possible for highway traffic, local traffic, and business interests.

In the process, each partner gained an understanding of how the other operates, the constraints under which each works, and the common desire to make things better. The city and state celebrated the completion of a major project that met the interests of both – an improved local Main Street and a more efficient north-south traffic corridor.

Dayton's downtown comes alive, improves economy

By Clark A. Posey

Planning Director, City of Dayton and Columbia County

In the early 1980s, Dayton's downtown was dying. Empty buildings lined the street in need of repair. People realized something needed to be done.

Mike Chamberlain, director of the Dayton Chamber of Commerce at the time, called a town meeting. About 300 people, nearly one-tenth of Dayton's population, attended. A brainstorming meeting, "big ideas" were written on paper hanging from the walls in the room. Leaders for committees to carry out those ideas were solicited.

Among the major ideas that emerged:

- **Restore Dayton's courthouse**, the oldest courthouse in the state in continuous use.
- **Form a Downtown Development Task Force** to implement downtown revitalization.
- **Start with small improvements** – planting grass and trees in a vacant lot and placing a walking bridge across the Touchet River to improve access.
- **Form a festivals' committee** for festivals and events in the community.

Community fundraisers helped to quickly reach the small improvements goals.

Discussion occurred on what downtown revitalization would look like. We decided not to develop a theme town or adopt building or sign ordinances. A Local Historic Preservation Commission was formed and tax incentives were used to encourage business owners to restore and renovate buildings to match the original look.

The downtown revitalization process started with grassroots support. A local improvement district was formed, which required a 60 percent approval vote from business owners inside the district. Dayton's district received 82 percent approval.

Dayton's Main Street, also U.S. Highway 12, was old and had a high

Dayton's historic downtown is thriving, due to a grassroots citizens' effort to revitalize a dying downtown.

PHOTO / COURTESY OF THE DAYTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

crown due to the many layers of asphalt applied over years. The community plan called for making our Main Street concrete, which required funding assistance from WSDOT.

New storm drains, buried plumbing lines, and other improvements were made under the street before putting down the new concrete. A shade darker than normal concrete was used to make it appear old. Streetlights and trees were carefully selected. Our lampposts are 18-foot tall, green, and the "King Luminair" style. Our trees are London Plane (sycamores). Garbage cans and benches to match were included.

A long, painful process, our Main Street revitalization is on-going. Along with WSDOT funding, grants were obtained from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development and Washington Local Development Matching Fund.

The committees had a mix of volunteers with varied talents – artists, construction people, financial leaders, and heads of organizations. The process wouldn't have worked without dedicated, persistent community



members with vision.

After 20 years, we now have incredible community pride, a much-improved business district, and the continual restoration of homes and businesses, said Jenni Dickinson, director of the Dayton Chamber of Commerce. Our Main Street is beautiful, and our large, healthy trees are one of the things tourists comment on most. We have become a well-respected historic destination. It never would have happened without the Main Street revitalization process.

The business occupancy rate on Main Street compared to the early 1980s has increased as has the number of new businesses. Unemployment has dropped significantly. Since the 1990s, median household income, travel-related employment, and travel spending have increased.

The next step for Dayton is the west end of town, and we have a lot of great ideas in mind. Visit us or see chamber@historicdayton.com.

Darrington takes plunge into shoreline management waters

By Paul Inghram, AICP

Senior Planner, Berryman and Henigar Inc.

Lavinia Bryson, planning commissioner for the City of Darrington asked, "Just how many agencies are involved in regulating the river?"

We counted out loud the various local, state, and federal agencies that in one way or another have a say regarding the Sauk River – state Ecology, state Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Forest Service, Federal Emergency Management Agency, etc. – and guessed a total of about 27. Actually there are about 12, which is still more than enough.

With a town administrative staff of two responsible for everything from managing the town cemetery to airport planning, why volunteer to take on planning for a river in such a complicated regulatory system?

There was initiative in the town. Darrington was just completing the 2004 update to its comprehensive plan, which had engaged the community. Like many small towns throughout the state, it was seeking ways to strengthen its

economic base and improve the quality of life for residents. Development of a local Shoreline Master Program was seen as a logical next step – a way to simultaneously protect natural resources and support the town's economy.

"When it comes to scenery and whitewater, the Sauk is a hit!" exclaims the Web site of Alpine Adventures, a whitewater tour operator. Darrington's prime location in the Cascades and the natural beauty of the Sauk River are strategic to attracting visitors and the tourist dollars that come with them.

The draft Shoreline Master Program applies an Urban Conservancy designation for most of the shoreline to emphasize a combination of environmental protection and low-impact recreation. To support continued operations at the lumber mill, the town's primary employer, the draft shoreline program creates a Manufacturing designation designed to recognize the site-specific conditions at the mill.

The proposed restoration plan

component of the shoreline program seeks to acquire undeveloped properties along the river for habitat protection, reduction of flood hazards, and potential "public" access to the river. Currently, the only public access available is across private property.

The overall objective of the shoreline program is to support economic development, community enjoyment, and environmental protection in ways that are mutually beneficial.

As the Shoreline Master Program nears completion, success can be attributed to active participation by the Sauk Suiattle Tribe, Hampton Lumber, the local USFS staff, and local property owners, and strong interest by the planning commission and city council. The Darrington shoreline program is expected to be locally approved by the time this newsletter is published.

Darrington shows that it's possible for small towns to plan for shorelines under the increasingly complex regulatory maze. Advice to other small towns tackling Shoreline Master Program updates:

- **Start early** – Our process took about two years. Don't try to complete a shoreline program in an unreasonably short period. If needed, ask for grants to be extended.
- **Engage stakeholders** – Focus on those issues that are most important to local stakeholders. With so many issues related to rivers and fish, it's easy to get pulled off target.
- **Ask questions** – Seek confirmation from Ecology on how to apply the new guidelines as early in the process as possible.

Darrington's shoreline planning will help protect the Sauk River, which attracts visitors and tourist dollars.

PHOTO / PAUL INGRAM



Leavenworth develops green infrastructure program to protect wetlands, offer development opportunities

By Connie Krueger, AICP

Director of Community Development, City of Leavenworth

In 1995 recently constructed homes within a newly platted subdivision in Leavenworth began to experience problems with flooding and structural deterioration.

After reviewing the situation, it became clear that a large portion of the city's undeveloped urban growth area had similar problems. In 1997 the city convened a team of scientists from local, state, and federal government to complete a field reconnaissance of the entire urban growth area.

The results and recommendations were assembled into a document titled "The Leavenworth Water Problems Study." It identified:

- The hydric soils within the urban growth area are one large wetland and aren't drainable when water levels are high due to the interconnected nature of the wetland.
- The wetland drains to the Wenatchee River and is regulated by federal law.
- Surface and groundwater are "one" through many months of the year.
- Wetland delineations must allow for documentation of hydrology throughout the growing season.

The presence of such a large mass of wetlands on nearly half of the developable land in the urban growth area was of concern. In addition, the unstable soils, flooding, and related water quality impacts from septic systems pose significant development challenges.

To the unknowing eye, surface water in these areas is present for only a short period of time during the year, and the remainder of the year this area appears to be prime sites for development. So for property owners who had known that their property was "wet" but planned to fill and develop it, the news that it was actually federally protected wetland added further to the problem. The city

In Leavenworth, new homes in the urban growth area are experiencing flood and structural damage.

PHOTO / COURTESY OF THE CITY OF LEAVENWORTH

struggled to come up with a solution that would address flooding, restoration and enhancement of critical areas for public use, and the protection of development opportunities.

Following completion of the study, the city worked with wetland scientists from the Washington State Department of Ecology to complete a "Landscape Analysis and Identification of Opportunities to Restore Water Flow Processes." The analysis was as follows:

1. Identification of regional problems.
2. Determination of water flow processes in relation to geologic processes.
3. Summarization of natural water flow processes.
4. Identification of areas where land use alters natural conditions.
5. Identification of restoration opportunities.

The city assembled a Technical Advisory Committee of representatives from local, state, and federal government. The committee chose a holistic solution, and the scope of work for the "Leavenworth Urban Growth Area Critical Areas, Stormwater, and Green Infrastructure Master Plan" was born.

The city obtained a state Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development grant for \$35,000. Consulting firms were then selected to work on proposals; however costs to



produce the plan averaged \$150,000, well outside of the city's budget.

Working with land conservation groups and the local watershed planning effort, the city wants to establish the project as a potential "storage" project to augment seasonal flows on the Wenatchee River and its tributaries.

Because this project is vital to its future, the city will continue to strive for a creative, integrated solution.

Rockford taps growth management to grow proactively

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

of Community, Trade and Economic Development for updates to its 2005 zoning and development regulations. Because the corridor plan established a community vision for the business district, support existed to use the rewrite in creating regulations for a town center overlay district, among other measures.

Today, opportunity has begun knocking at Rockford's door. Thanks to the department and block grants, managed growth is something the small town may well accomplish.

Common sense, the final frontier for local planning?

By Margaret Fleek

Planning Director, City of Burlington

Looking around Burlington, set in the middle of the floodplain with the mighty Skagit River on two sides and legacy farmland on the other two sides, you have a great example of a community that has appropriately made the choice to stay “small and rich.”

The mayor and city council strongly support the planning process adopted to revitalize historic Burlington, and have also adopted a Community Connections Plan for open space all the way around the city that will be designed as a permanent buffer.

“If we don’t take the lead, no one will,” observed Roger Tjeerdsma, mayor of Burlington.

With on-going neighborhood planning and a strong Downtown Burlington Association, the plans have been developed gradually in terms of level of detail and focus over the 15 growth management-planning years, with greater zeal in the past three years. This is because great ideas blossomed through

a University of Washington Department of Landscape Architecture Design Studio in 2002, including choices for handling a largely abandoned industrial area along the railroad tracks.

Higher residential densities in historic Burlington will focus on excellent streets, public spaces, and ownership opportunities such as townhouses and cottage housing, with taller mixed-used projects on the traditional downtown Main Street.

New dwelling units will pay a fee to the Burlington Agricultural Heritage Credit program for each unit over the base density of four units per acre, as part of our partnership with farmland preservation. These funds go directly to the Skagit County Farmland Legacy Program to help pay for acquisition of targeted development rights and conservation easements around the city.

Getting every interest group into the room to debate future urban growth area boundaries provided extra incentive to the vision. The big question is: Will common sense prevail so that a

logical permanent boundary can be implemented around Burlington? It’s feasible “on paper” using a different approach to zoning with elements of the relatively recent form-based codes – zoning by pictures and tables with built-in design and environmental standards that are easy to follow. Also called transect zoning, it appears to be a good fit for Burlington, with lots of local modifications.

Efforts to simply add a design review layer for Downtown failed for lack of enthusiasm by the design professionals we asked to assist in project review, so it’s back to the task force for an all-new code!

Common sense is needed for diverse interests to come together to address tricky local issues such as locating permanent farm worker housing with urban services, building schools in optimal locations for the growing student population, and restoring habitat/wetland corridors in farmlands. Without a strong dose of common sense in addition to our commitment to the

growth management vision of containing growth in critical areas, there may be no end to arguing about the edges to the long-term detriment of the public interest.



Historic Burlington is being revitalized, and the city will have a permanent buffer of open space around the entire city.

PHOTO / COURTESY OF THE CITY OF BURLINGTON

Helping small cities achieve their potential

By Cynthia Stewart
Executive Director, Northwest
Small Cities Services

What do Cosmopolis, Connell, Kettle Falls, Ritzville, and Lyman have in common? Each recently worked with Northwest Small Cities Services (NWSCS) at low or no cost to complete important projects.

Small cities have all of the requirements that larger jurisdictions do, but with fewer resources. Even though talented elected officials and staff often reside in smaller communities, the tax bases are smaller and budgets are tighter, making the problems tougher to address.

For that reason, NWSCS was founded 18 years ago as a nonprofit organization. Its mission is to ensure stronger local governments and enhance the economic, environmental, management, and operating capacity of small cities. Recently, the board voted to include small, rural counties in the mission.

Connell received training in the use of a capital facilities planning tool that can save in-house resources and reduce consultant costs. NWSCS, working with the state Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, provides such capacity building service by partnering with organizations that share the same goals.

Through a Verizon Foundation grant, Lyman will have a Web site soon. Through a federal grant to aid small rural communities in planning how to implement water and sewer infrastructure projects, Kettle Falls was able to study trenchless sewer pipe replacement technology. NWSCS uses grants to assist communities.

When the Cosmopolis City Council had a retreat to develop a vision and city goals, NWSCS provided a facilitator. With conflict resolution expertise now on staff, it can help communities with community building, siting projects, and city hall conflicts.

When Ritzville needed a grant application reviewed, NWSCS provided the service at no charge. NWSCS welcomes inquiries and will help find resources if it can't provide assistance.

For further information, call 206-523-1176 or e-mail stewdahl@comcast.net.

Critical areas help is on the way for small communities

By Doug Peters
Senior Planner, Growth Management Services

A new technical assistance tool for preparing a Critical Areas Ordinance is being developed for small cities and towns by the state Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development.

This project will result in sample ordinance language and administrative approaches for varying city needs, based on successful local examples and selections from recent state agency management recommendations.

Using a \$32,000 grant from the state Department of Ecology, the sample ordinance will help small communities address the requirement of the Growth Management Act to designate and protect critical areas. Critical areas include frequently flooded areas, areas with critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water, geologically hazardous areas, wetlands, and fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas.

A key goal of the project is to condense and simplify the language and administrative steps so small towns with limited staff can successfully interpret and administer their critical areas ordinances.

The department wants interested small city and town staff, planning commissioners, and elected officials to serve on a project advisory group and is advertising for a consultant to work on the project.

The advisory committee, consultant, and state agency staff will be identifying issues, examining and discussing alternative approaches, and reviewing drafts of the guidance as it's developed over the next six months. Participant travel costs for small city/town representatives will be available through the department.

The department is working with the Association of Washington Cities to communicate with small communities about the project. It's also working with the Washington State Association of Counties and small communities to explore the concept of using counties as administrative and technical resources for small jurisdictions through intergovernmental agreements.

To learn more about this project, call 360-725-3046 or e-mail douglasp@cted.wa.gov.

Open space preservation in Black Diamond

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space in and around Black Diamond. By working with King County, the Cascade Land Conservancy, and Plum Creek Timber, the city was able to accommodate development rights from an area known as Ravensdale Ridge in 2005, allowing for the conservation of 1,600 acres of open space and a trail corridor. The city also received ownership of 150 acres of property on Lake Sawyer for a park, 27 acres of park space along a salmon bearing stream, and more than 100 acres of open space throughout the city. This local effort will serve as a match to conserve development rights from up to 6,000 acres of nearby forestland through the Federal Forest Legacy Program.

"The TDR has caused us to think creatively about how we can achieve our vision," said Botts. "Future generations will now have the opportunity raise their children with the same quality of life that I enjoyed growing up here, and that is no small accomplishment here in King County."

**Washington State Department of Community,
Trade and Economic Development**

Growth Management Services

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